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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004276

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR RPM:WORTH ANDERSON

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [AFGHANISTAN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN PRT/FSB BACK IN PLAY

REF: A) ROME 3849 B) ROME 2913 C) ROME 2122

Classified By: POL M/C TOM COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) Summary. In a November 4 discussion with PolMil Officers, MFA NATO Office Director said that Italy is going forward with plans to contribute to a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and/or Forward Support Base (FSB) in Afghanistan. He stressed, however, that Italy cannot go it alone and that significant support will be needed from the US both to make Italian involvement feasible militarily and to send a political message of commitment to ISAF. Brauzzi also was upbeat on proposals for the planned ISAF/OEF merger, noting that it might be more palatable to some allies to speak of the change as an ISAF expansion rather than a merger with OEF. End summary.

PRT/FSB Planning Underway

2. (C) PolMil Counselor and PolMil Officer met with Giovanni Brauzzi, head of the MFA's NATO Office, on November 4. Brauzzi said Italy had just decided to work on a contribution to a PRT and/or FSB in Herat. More information, he said, would be available following a November 5 meeting at SHAPE and a VTC with SACEUR week of November 8. Brauzzi acknowledged that this was very preliminary information, but stated that Italy was already planning to send out reconnaissance teams in late November/early December, an advance team in January, and to have its full complement on the ground in Afghanistan by March. (Note: Brauzzi admitted that the Italian bureaucracy was surprised by Defense Minister Martino's statement in Romania and has since gotten its PRT/FSB planning underway. End note.)

3. (C) Brauzzi stressed that a "substantial goodwill gesture" from the US would be important to help Italy do this -- one, he suggested, that would, by placing US resources in a Herat PRT and/or FSB, help set the stage for an OEF/ISAF merger by showing US commitment to/involvement in ISAF. The only potential partner (besides the US, from whom support was indispensable) Brauzzi was aware of at this stage was Canada, but he said he would know more after the meetings and VTC over the next week. Renewed Canadian interest, he commented, has spurred the Italians into action, but the Canadians were looking at leading a PRT next August (2005), which, coming after the scheduled parliamentary elections, was very late. He did not see much hope for either Spanish or Turkish participation, but added that with US support, not much more would be needed.

ISAF/OEF Merger

4. (C) Brauzzi also said he had attended a meeting at the Italian General Defense Staff that morning that discussed a British paper on the proposed ISAF/OEF merger. Italy, he said, would be responding soon in a "constructive" way, proposing only minor amendments to "to fix the language." Brauzzi commented that it would be an excellent idea to bring the Turks into the three-way discussion (US-UK-Italy). He also said that there were hints that there could be an evolution in the Germans' thinking, especially if, instead of talking about a merger, the focus was on ISAF expansion, ultimately "subsuming" OEF. (Brauzzi noted that there were hints of this approach in the UK paper). He added that once this is discussed at the NAC, the relevant military authorities should be tasked to provide a basis for further discussion and movement on this issue. The devil will be in the details, he added, trying to determine how many helicopters, hospitals, etc., are needed for the combined mission.

Minimize Considered.

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